United Nations A/55/6 (Prog. 20)

General Assembly

Distr.: General
4 April 2000

Original: English

Fifty-fifth session
Item 120 of the preliminary list*
Programme planning

Proposed medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005

Programme 20
Humanitarian assistance

Contents

	Page
Overall orientation	2
Subprogramme 1. Policy and analysis	2
Subprogramme 2. Complex emergencies	2
Subprogramme 3. Natural disaster reduction	3
Subprogramme 4. Disaster relief	4
Subprogramme 5. Humanitarian emergency information and advocacy	4
Legislative mandates	6

* A/55/50.

00-36663 (E) 270400

Overall orientation

20.1 The overall purpose of the programme is to ensure the timely, coherent and coordinated response of the international community to disasters and emergencies; to promote natural disaster reduction; and to facilitate the smooth transition from emergency relief to rehabilitation and development. The legislative authority and mandate for this programme are derived from General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991, in which the Assembly reconfirmed and reinforced earlier decisions and resolutions adopted by it and the Economic and Social Council concerning humanitarian assistance and the leadership role of the Secretary-General in responding to natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is responsible for the implementation of this programme and the achievement of its objectives.

20.2 The strategy for implementing the programme is based on: the need for the development and promotion of a common policy on humanitarian issues for the United Nations system and its partners; the mobilization and coordination of assistance in complex emergencies; advocacy of humanitarian principles and concerns; the promotion of natural disaster reduction; the mobilization and coordination of assistance for disasters; and the availability of timely information on emergencies and natural disasters to facilitate global humanitarian assistance.

Subprogramme 1
Policy and analysis

Objective

20.3 The objective of this subprogramme is to ensure an effective international response to humanitarian crises through the implementation of coherent policies on humanitarian issues.

Strategy

20.4 Within the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the substantive responsibility for this subprogramme is vested in the Policy Development and Advocacy Branch and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs secretariat. The Branch will develop coherent policies for the United Nations system on humanitarian issues, including those on access to and protection of the civilian victims of armed conflict and natural disasters and on security for humanitarian staff and supplies. It will also develop and promote the acceptance and implementation of policies to strengthen assistance to and protection of internally displaced persons. Support will be given to the planning of humanitarian operations and humanitarian components of peacekeeping operations as well as to the establishment of effective planning capacities for the management of the transition from relief to reconstruction and development. In addition, efforts will be made to ensure that lessons learned from past humanitarian operations are applied to the strengthening of future humanitarian operations. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee secretariat will provide support to the Committee in its efforts to ensure a well-coordinated international response to humanitarian crises.

Expected accomplishments

20.5 Expected accomplishments would include improvement of the coordinated delivery of humanitarian assistance and protection and the adoption of policies by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee for the effective implementation of country-specific arrangements.

Indicators of achievement

20.6 Indicators of achievement would include more timely delivery of humanitarian assistance by the United Nations system; the adoption of policy measures by United Nations legislative bodies; and an increase in the number of agreements reached by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on country-specific issues.

Subprogramme 2
Complex emergencies

Objective

20.7 The objective of this subprogramme is to ensure the coherent, timely and effective response by the United Nations system and its partners to complex emergencies.

Strategy

20.8 Within the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the substantive responsibility for this subprogramme is vested in the Complex Emergency Response Branch and the Emergency Liaison Branch. The Complex Emergency Response Branch will provide support to resident and humanitarian coordinators in the field to ensure effective field-based coordination; implement field-based strategic planning for the common humanitarian action plans of the United Nations; and draw up appeals to solicit support from the donor community. The Emergency Liaison Branch will make available to the United Nations system and its partners information and advice on a timely basis with respect to issues linking humanitarian situations with political, security and military dimensions, and will ensure proper integration where appropriate of humanitarian assistance with political and peacekeeping initiatives.

Expected accomplishments

20.9 Expected accomplishments would include a more timely and better-coordinated response and the provision of more support to countries in or emerging from civil crisis; more effective information flow among political, peacekeeping, development and humanitarian elements of the United Nations system; and an increase in funding for humanitarian activities.

Indicator of achievement

20.10 Indicators of achievement would include improved response time for complex emergencies, improved management of field coordination units and increased response by the donor community to the consolidated appeals for complex emergencies.

Subprogramme 3
Natural disaster reduction

Objective

20.11 The objective of this subprogramme is to reduce vulnerability to natural disasters.

Strategy

20.12 The substantive responsibility for this subprogramme is vested in the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. Pursuant to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the secretariat will establish a thematic working group within the framework of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction for the purpose of coordinating efforts to address disaster reduction and climate research, climate change and global warming, as well as climatic variability. Other types of activities will include: (a) the establishment of an international coordinating platform for integrated early-warning processes for natural, technological and environmental disasters; (b) the development of a common international understanding and approach to the analysis of the social and economic impacts of natural, technological and environmental disasters; and (c) the exchange of information and technology on disaster reduction through networking partnerships among communities at the subregional, regional and international levels. Particular attention will be given to specific recommendations for improved disaster reduction measures in small island developing States and in Africa. The subprogramme will also undertake to increase public awareness of the risks that natural disasters as well as technological and environmental hazards pose to modern societies. It will engage public participation at all levels of implementation so as to create disaster-resistant communities through the expansion of risk-reduction networks. It will also undertake to strengthen the operational capacity of developing countries in the areas of disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness within the framework of international development cooperation, in particular through the United Nations Development Programme.

Expected accomplishments

20.13 Expected accomplishments would include increased capacity of developing countries for preparedness in disaster prevention and mitigation; expanded scientific and technical knowledge about reducing vulnerability to natural disasters; and increased public awareness of the risks associated with natural, technological and environmental hazards.

Indicator of achievement

20.14 Indicators of achievement would include an increase in the number of countries having the technical capacity to deal with disaster prevention and mitigation; improved early-warning processes for

natural, technological and environmental disasters; and an increase in the number of risk-reduction networks.

Subprogramme 4
Disaster relief

Objective

20.15 The primary objective of this subprogramme is to facilitate the timely delivery of disaster relief assistance to victims of natural disasters and environmental emergencies, including technological accidents.

Strategy

20.16 Within the Office, the substantive responsibility for this subprogramme is vested in the Disaster Response Branch. The Branch will continue to aim at the timely mobilization and coordination of international assistance to countries affected by natural or other sudden-onset disasters through strengthened cooperation between assisting and recipient countries, agencies and organizations providing humanitarian relief. The existing emergency response system will be strengthened through: (a) disaster response preparedness, including standby mechanisms; (b) needs assessment and coordination tools, such as the United Nations disaster assessment and coordination teams, the application of telecommunications technology and improved national and regional capacities; (c) the provision of support to Member States and international response networks to ensure improved cooperation and coordination in crisis management; (d) the application of analyses of and lessons learned following natural disasters; (e) the development of capacities to respond to environmental emergencies and industrial accidents; and (f) coordination, on a more timely basis, of international search-and-rescue efforts after earthquakes. Initiatives will be also taken to reinforce services to field offices through greater participation in the inter-agency structure, through training initiatives in disaster management and through the regional disaster response advisers. The Branch will continue its efforts to encourage donor support through informational meetings and post-mission briefings, as well as through the preparation of inter-agency appeals, in cooperation with operational agencies, following major disasters with a view to facilitating the transition from relief to rehabilitation and development.

Expected accomplishment

20.17 An expected accomplishment would be a more timely alleviation of the suffering caused by natural and other disasters.

Indicator of achievement

20.18 Indicators of achievement would include more timely and better coordination of responses to the countries affected by disasters; increased participation in training seminars on disaster management; improved field and regional cooperation in disaster management; and increased donor responses to inter-agency appeals.

Subprogramme 5
Humanitarian emergency information and advocacy

Objective

20.19 The objective of the subprogramme is to facilitate decision-making of the international and humanitarian community on relief, logistics, funding and contingency planning and to increase support for and awareness of humanitarian principles and concerns.

Strategy

20.20 Within the Office, the substantive responsibility for this subprogramme is vested in the Information Management Services Branch. The Branch will provide time-critical and reliable information on unfolding emergencies and natural disasters for global humanitarian assistance. The Branch will also provide information technology support for the Office by utilizing the latest information technologies to facilitate access to information. It will maximize the reach of publications to the humanitarian community. It will maintain and strengthen the Office's web sites, including ReliefWeb/OCHA-Online, the Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) and other field-based web sites so as to ensure the timely availability of emergency information. The information available to users will be further enhanced through partnership with other members of the humanitarian community for information sharing, coordination and standardization. With regard to complex emergencies, the Branch will provide early warning information by monitoring a standard set of indicators and by preparing

recommendations on preventive and preparedness measures. It will continue to provide secretariat and technical support to the United Nations inter-agency framework for coordination teams and to assist United Nations country teams in the preparation of contingency plans.

Expected accomplishment

20.21 Expected accomplishments would include more timely provision of relief, logistics, funding and contingency planning, in view of the expanded access to and increased utilization of timely information on emergency situations, an increased level of preparedness to deal with emergencies and greater compliance with humanitarian principles and increased understanding of humanitarian concerns.

Indicator of achievement

20.22 Indicators of achievement would include an improvement in emergency response time because of the availability of information and an increase in the number of users of information made available through ReliefWeb, OCHA-Online and IRIN.

Legislative mandates

Programme 20
Humanitarian assistance

General Assembly resolutions

46/182	Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations
47/120	An Agenda for Peace: preventive diplomacy and related matters
53/192	Triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system
54/95	Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations
54/96	Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: special economic assistance to individual countries or regions
54/192	Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel

Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions

1999/1	Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance

Security Council resolution

1265 (1999)

Subprogramme 1
Policy and analysis

General Assembly resolutions

52/12 A and B	Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform
52/171	Participation of volunteers, "White Helmets", in activities of the United Nations in the field of humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and technical cooperation for development

Subprogramme 2
Complex emergencies

General Assembly resolutions

52/172	Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster
52/211 A	Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan

52/211 B The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Subprogramme 3
Natural disaster reduction

General Assembly resolutions

54/219 International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction: successor arrangements

54/220 International cooperation to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon

54/233 International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters from relief to development

Economic and Social Council resolutions

1999/46 International cooperation to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon

1999/63 International decade for natural disaster reduction: successor arrangements

Subprogramme 4
Disaster relief

General Assembly resolution

54/30 Emergency response to disasters